



Ministry of Environment

Male', Republic of Maldives.

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Maldives' Statement at the Committee on Environment and Development, Sixth Session

9 DEC 2020 TO 10 DEC 2020

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE, BANGKOK, THAILAND

Agenda Item 3: Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific through environmental solutions

First of all, I wish to thank and congratulate the Secretariat on the excellent arrangements made to hold this session of the Environment and Development Committee. I recognize that this is no ordinary feat given the wide-ranging challenges that the pandemic presents.

The pandemic has clearly demonstrated to us the precarious state of our progress towards sustainable development. The effects and impacts of the pandemic threaten to undermine, and in many cases regress the collective progress we have made over the years. We now need a renewed commitment and effort to ensure that the 2030 Agenda is achieved.

We in the Maldives, along with every other country, are dealing with one of the greatest challenges in modern history. Our economies and well-being of our peoples have been critically affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has also shown us precisely why we need the Agenda 2030. Improving socio-economic well-being, and ensuring environmental sustainability will be key to be prepared, and mitigate such crises.

Investing in, and catalyzing action towards environmental protection and sustainability can go a long way towards achieving this. I am convinced that this can help us find solutions to crises such as we face today, as well as give us the opportunity to avoid and mitigate similar crises. And this is why even through the pandemic, we in the Maldives remain committed to protect and conserve our environment.

We are a nation that depends on the natural beauty of our islands for our livelihood and sustenance, which is threatened by climate change and unsustainable use of natural resources. Therefore, protecting and conserving the environment of our island nation is crucial.

And in this regard, the declaration of Addu Atoll and Fuvahmulah Atoll of Maldives as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in addition to the already existing Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve has been a long-awaited milestone for us and it a step towards not only environmental conservation but also sustainable development. This model has shown the contribution a





biosphere reserve can make to the livelihoods of the people, how it can contribute to the economy, and how it can promote research and education. And this is what we hope to replicate across Maldives.

With regards to air quality, Maldives is conducting a study to assess the Cost-Benefit for introducing Euro VI Fuel and Vehicle Emissions Standards in the Maldives. The objective of this study is to evaluate the feasibility of introducing 10ppm sulfur fuel standards for petrol and diesel used for on-road vehicles and boats, and introducing Euro VI vehicle emissions standards in the Maldives. This study will identify policy options that are expected to give reductions in emissions and ultimately impact the quality of life especially in urban areas.

In addition, in 2019 Maldives developed the first National Action Plan on Air Pollutants, which is linked it heavily with national climate change mitigation efforts. It was the first time that reductions in air pollutants were nationally quantified with the aim of reducing air pollution and improving human health. In order to implement this action plan, currently we are working on developing a detailed implementation pathway that clearly indicates roles, timelines and important milestones.

We are also developing a project with Global Environment Facility, which will promote innovation and technology transfer for sustainable energy breakthroughs for electric drive technology and electric mobility. The objective of the project is to promote an integrated, sustainable and low-emissions transport system and reduce GHG emissions and air pollution from the transport sector as well as address energy security by reducing fossil fuel consumption.

The project will result in an integrated urban transport plan that leads to enhanced coordination among various government stakeholders and development of projects to establish more environment friendly public transport with low emission infrastructures.

Whilst we continue to work towards environmental protection and conservation at the national level, we also remain concerned that the pandemic can significantly, and negatively affect the progress we have made at the regional and international level towards environmental sustainability. This is a critical time, and a time that we must remain steadfast in our commitments, for both the present and future generations. In the Asia Pacific region, we have had a long history of collaboration and working together on transboundary issues. I hope that we continue this tradition, and continue to further strengthen regional environmental governance and co-operation.

I thank you.

